

Lake Perris

State Recreation Area



Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.



California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at (951) 940-5600. This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting:

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

P. O. Box 942896

Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

For information call: (800) 777-0369

(916) 653-6995, outside the U.S.

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Discover the many states of California.™

Lake Perris State Recreation Area

17801 Lake Perris Drive

Perris, CA 92571

(951) 940-5600

*Lake Perris beckons
visitors with cool
blue waters, pristine
beaches, top-notch bass
fishing, wildlife watching
and miles of riding
and hiking trails.*



Hidden among rock-studded

hills, Lake Perris State Recreation Area's 8,800 acres of broad valley are bounded on three sides by low ridges.

The Bernasconi Hills and the Russell, Apuma and Armada Mountains obscure the view of nearby cities. Inland, the San Bernardino, San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains, snow-capped in winter months, stand tall in the distance. This area, with its varied terrain and habitats, is rich in a variety of wildlife.

About 65 miles south of Los Angeles and 11 miles southeast of the city of Riverside, Lake Perris's clean white beaches, enticing blue waters, and rocky Alessandro Island bring nearly one million visitors each year from surrounding communities.

Activities in this popular park include fishing, water sports, bird watching, hiking, rock climbing, camping, horseback riding, and visiting the Ya'i Heki' (pronounced yahee ehkey) Regional Indian Museum.

PARK HISTORY

Native People

For thousands of years, the native California groups who lived here enjoyed the area's abundant resources and mild climate. Food, water, shelter and clothing were plentiful. The natives gathered seeds, acorns, wild fruits and berries, roots and greens,



Rare snowfall

and they hunted antelope, bighorn sheep, deer, rabbits, birds and a variety of small mammals. Native seasonal houses were made of leaves and branches laid over tree limbs set upright, and natives occasionally built low rock walls or other small structures.

Although distinct social units, the two largest groups—the Cahuilla and Luiseño—shared similar subsistence and settlement adaptations. The Luiseño ranged west to the coast while the Cahuilla extended east into the San Jacinto Mountains and Colorado Desert, overlapping in inland valley areas, including Perris Valley. Artifacts found prior to dam construction indicate that both the Luiseño and Cahuilla traded with such nearby groups as the Serrano, Tongva (Gabrielino), Cupeño and Chemehuevi. These cultures are all known for their rock art, some of which is still visible in parts of the landscape. However, time and weathering have taken their toll on most pictographs.

The lives of these people changed drastically with the arrival of Europeans. Epidemics of diseases to which the native people had no immunity took their toll, especially on those who had been resettled into the crowded conditions of the missions. Today, through community outreach and education, native groups are maintaining their cultures through song, dance, crafts, ceremonies and languages.

NATURAL HISTORY

Summers are hot and dry. The hottest months are from June through September, with an average high of 94 degrees in August. From December through April, rainfall averages about 10 inches; the average high temperature is 71 degrees, with a low of 46 degrees at night.

Vegetation

The open area around the lake is anything but barren. The scrub vegetation occupying the south faces of the Russell Mountains and the Bernasconi Hills typically consists of brittlebrush, desert encelia, sagebrush, black and white sages, buckwheat and cactus species. The shadier northern or northwestern slopes are ideal for chamise and penstemon, interior live oak and sugar bush. Between November and April, these slopes are covered with colorful wildflowers, including goldfields, California poppies, phacelia and common fiddleneck. The valley grassland areas, visible in a few isolated locations, are only a remnant of once-abundant perennial grasses. Poison oak also grows in various locations—learn to recognize it and avoid it.



Wildflower meadow

Wildlife

The coastal sage scrub and chaparral provide habitat for mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, rabbits, raccoons, skunks, California quail, gopher snakes and rattlesnakes. Though generally shy, these animals can sometimes be spotted during daylight hours. Please do not feed any wild animals that you encounter.

Lake Perris is home to more than a hundred species of birds, many migratory. Some birds are here for short stopovers during their migrations, while others are permanent residents. Among their numbers are roadrunners, loggerhead shrikes, larks, California thrashers, California quail, hummingbirds, ospreys, and several types of hawks, wrens, and occasional bald eagles. Waterfowl visitors include pintails, teals, mallards, widgeons, several varieties of geese, and occasional whistling swans and pelicans. The water's edge attracts avocets, willets, kingfishers, killdeer, black-necked stilts, egrets and herons.

Raptors include various hawks and owls. Golden eagles and falcons soar over the hills seeking their next meal. The best time to observe these birds is in early morning and at dusk. Check with staff about guided hikes.



Red-tailed hawk

THE WATER PROJECT

In 1973 the newly opened Lake Perris State Recreation Area became the southernmost reservoir in the 701-mile California State Water Project. When 80 percent full, the lake's elevation is 1,560 feet above sea level, covering 1,800 surface acres. Located between the cities of Moreno Valley and Perris, this facility has been instrumental in the growth of

surrounding communities.

Lake Perris Water Drawdown

Though there is no imminent threat to life or property, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has identified potential seismic safety risks in a section of the foundation of Perris Dam. For the safety of those living downstream, DWR has taken the precaution of lowering the lake level by about 20 percent (24 feet) while they repair and retrofit the dam. DWR will replace the dam's foundation materials and reinforce its stability with a berm (a raised bank used as a barrier) to be constructed on top of the retrofitted foundation. Construction is tentatively set for the fall of 2009, with completion of the dam by fall of 2012.

Boating is the activity most affected by the drawdown, which will reduce the 35-mph boating zone of the lake to the area between the dam and Alessandro Island. From the island east, the speed limit is now 5 mph; swimming is allowed only at Perris Beach.

RECREATION

Fishing—Lake Perris is known for top-notch bass fishing. Twice a month the lake is stocked with trout, channel catfish and Florida bluegill. “Accidental” lake residents include green sunfish, crayfish and shrimp that arrived via the aqueduct. For information on stocking, call the Department of Fish and Game (909-484-0459). California state fishing licenses are available at bait shops, at sporting goods stores with fishing gear, and at the Lake Perris Marina (951-657-2179). Single-day passes sell out quickly.

Camping—The family campground has 167 sites for tent camping (no hookups); water, electricity and sink water hookups are available in the 264 paved R.V. sites. Each site has a table, fire ring with a grill and access to piped water. Sites accommodate a maximum of 8 people, and a maximum of three licensed vehicles. No extra-vehicle parking is available. Restrooms are nearby, and a trailer sanitation station is near the campground entrance. Camping reservations are site-specific (800-444-7275).

Horse Camping—The primitive Horse Camp, separate from the family camping



Fishing on the lake

area, has corrals, water troughs, picnic tables, fire rings, drinking water and chemical toilets. Each of the seven units accommodates a maximum of eight people and two compatible horses per site.

Picnicking—Lake Perris has nearly 300 picnic sites, many under shade, in various day-use areas throughout the park. The most popular locations are near Moreno Beach and Perris Beach. Groups can be accommodated at three group picnic sites; larger groups may combine more than one group site. Tables and grills are available.

Swimming—At full lake level there are two designated swimming areas: Moreno Beach, reached from lots 8, 9 and 10; and Perris Beach, reached through lots 1, 2, 3 and 4. Lifeguards are on duty daily through the summer, and on weekends in spring and fall. Scuba diving is permitted at the west end of Perris Beach, reachable from lots 1 and 2. Changing rooms, showers and restrooms are located behind towers 2 and 4.

Boating—The lower lake level dictates that fewer boats can be accommodated. To ensure entry, make reservations at (800) 444-7275. Each watercraft must have its own reservation. Launch ramps are located on the north side of the lake, with vehicle parking on the east side of the boat ramp parking lots. Call the park for information on speed limits and other changes related to the drawdown.

Alessandro Island—the island is solely for day use, and can be reached only by boat. Alessandro Island has shaded picnic tables with grills nearby and a trail that leads to the island's high point.

Hiking, Bicycling and Horseback Riding—

The park has a nine-mile equestrian, hiking and bicycling trail that circles the lake. Another hiking trail leads to the top of Terri Peak. Bring your own horses or rent them from Lake Perris Stables (951-801-8120).

Ya'i Hek'i Regional Indian Museum—The name of the museum is Cahuilla for “Home of the Wind.” The museum interprets the history and cultural aspects of the native groups who call this region home. It is open on weekends from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Reservations are required for school group tours. For information about school group tours, call the Lake Perris Sector Office (951-657-0676).

Rock Climbing—Located in the park, Big Rock is open year round. It provides climbing opportunities for beginning and intermediate climbers, and even has challenges for advanced climbers. Bring plenty of drinking water. **Climb at your own risk**—California State Parks does not install or maintain the fixtures or equipment at Big Rock.

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Scattered throughout the park are accessible facilities for camping, picnicking, fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, exhibits, programs, and usable restrooms. Please refer to the map for location of these facilities, marked with the Accessible Feature symbol.

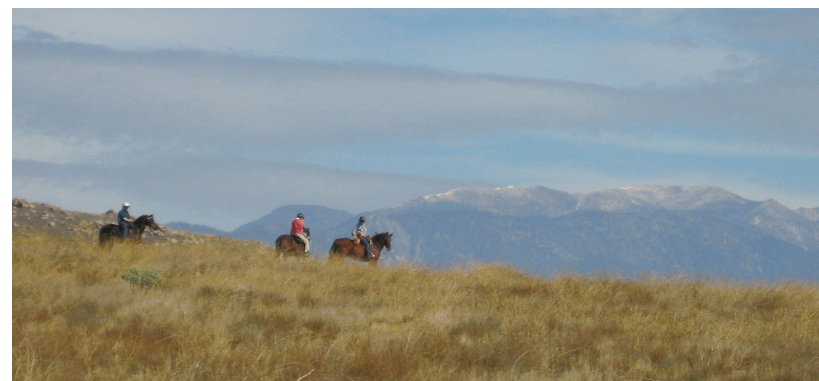
Visitors reserving accessible campsites must possess a Department of Motor Vehicles

(DMV) Disabled Placard or a license plate issued by the DMV (or a similar agency of another state). Disabled veterans with a Disabled Veterans license plate must also meet the requirement for reserving and occupying an accessible campsite. At the time of check-in, visitors must show the DMV disability paperwork that was issued to them at the time their placard or license plate was issued.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

- Chino Hills State Park, north of Corona via Butterfield Rd. off Hwy. 71, 951-780-6222
- California Citrus State Historic Park, in Riverside, 9400 Dufferin Ave., 951-780-6222
- Mount San Jacinto State Park, via Hwy. 243 from Idyllwild or by tram from Palm Springs, 951-659-2107

This park receives support from
Lake Perris Interpretive Association
17801 Lake Perris Drive, Box 124
Perris, CA 92571



An equestrian trail

